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All Hands

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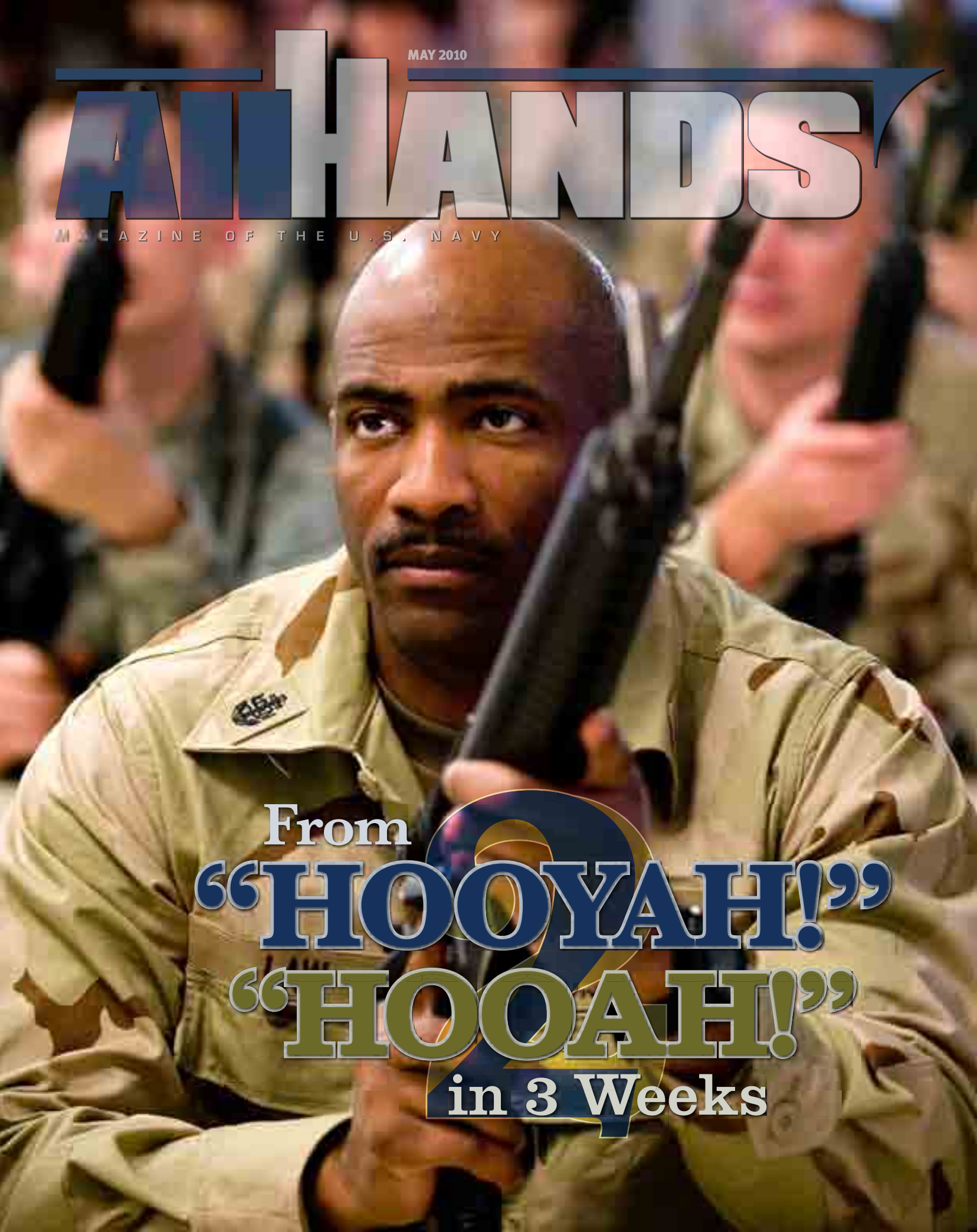
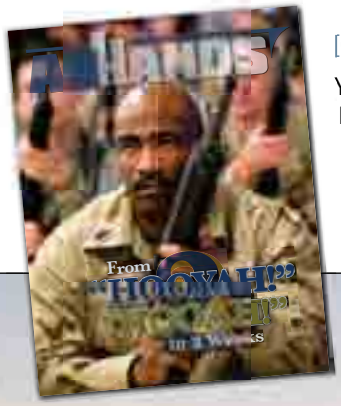


From "HOOYAH!" to "HOOAH!" in 3 Weeks



[On the Front Cover]

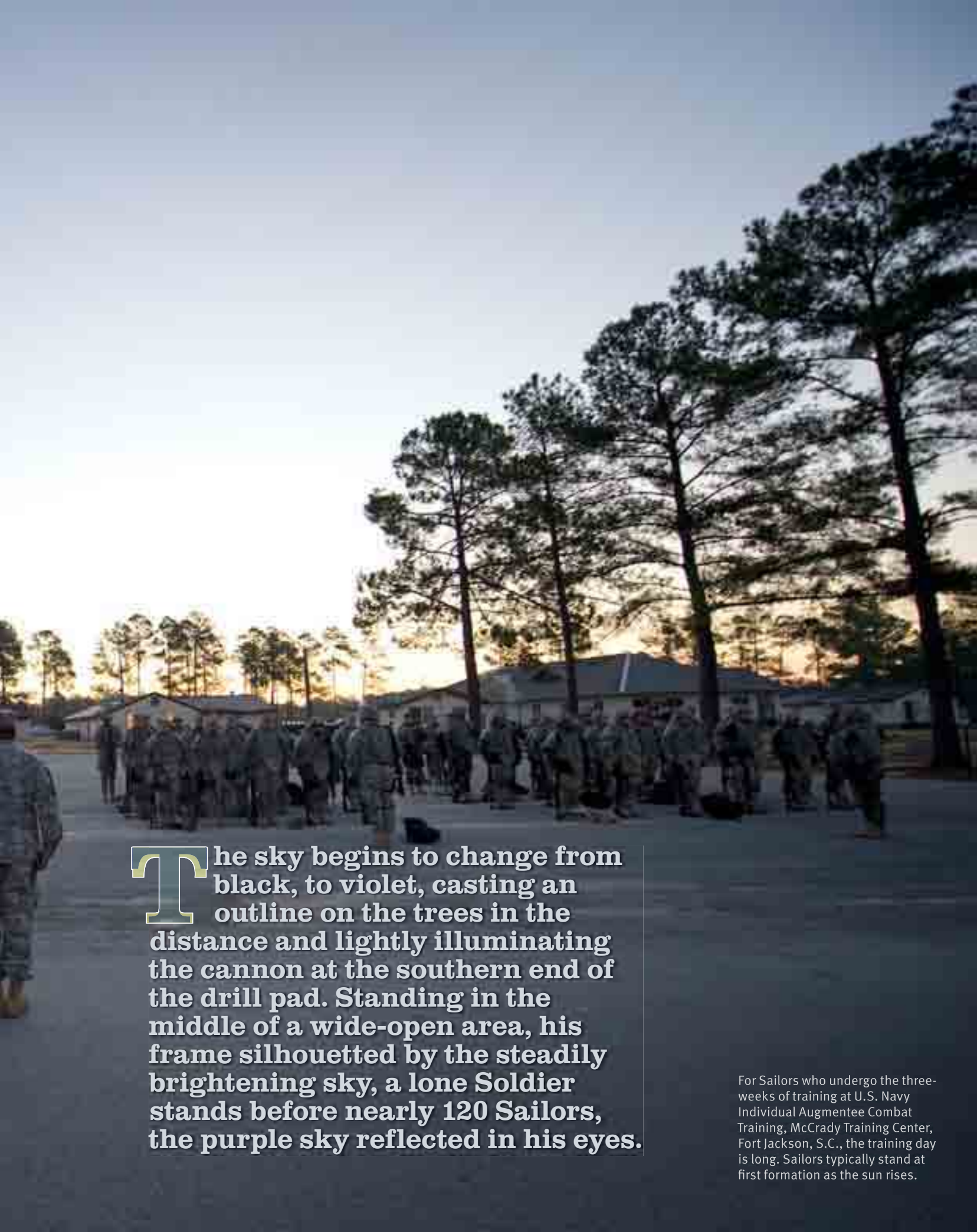
YNC(SW) Derrick Law along with his shipmates are attending the three-week U.S. Navy Individual Augmentee Combat Training at McCrady Training Center, Fort Jackson, S.C., to bolster their weapons-handling ability and confidence through extensive familiarization training and live-fire exercises. The training is designed to prepare Sailors for upcoming support assignments and individual augmentees deployments.

Photo by MC1(AW) R. Jason Brunson

IT2 Donald Acker from Augusta, Kan., calls home to say goodbye to wife on his last evening at Fort Jackson, S.C.

From "HOOYAH!" to "HOOAH!" in 3 Weeks

Story by MC2(SW) Elizabeth Vlahos | Photos by MC1(AW) R. Jason Brunson



The sky begins to change from black, to violet, casting an outline on the trees in the distance and lightly illuminating the cannon at the southern end of the drill pad. Standing in the middle of a wide-open area, his frame silhouetted by the steadily brightening sky, a lone Soldier stands before nearly 120 Sailors, the purple sky reflected in his eyes.

For Sailors who undergo the three-weeks of training at U.S. Navy Individual Augmentee Combat Training, McCrady Training Center, Fort Jackson, S.C., the training day is long. Sailors typically stand at first formation as the sun rises.

Purple. The color represents the joint blending of the Navy, Army, Air Force and Marine Corps on the DoD palette.

Scores of individual augmentee (IA) Sailors face this scene every year, from the moment the bus rolls through the gates of McCrady Training Center, Fort Jackson, S.C., until they depart for the next step of the journey. The next three weeks will be a crash course in the United States Army – which is exactly what the Sailors will need to work seamlessly with the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines they will support upon arriving at their destination.

The Army works hand-in-hand with the Naval Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center (ECRC) to ensure these Sailors receive the training they need to better augment the Army once they arrive on station.

100 Percent Ready to Go

ECRC is responsible for providing training and administrative support for the Sailors attending Navy IA Combat Training (NIACT). The ECRC detachment at Fort Jackson trains nearly 45 percent of the Navy's IAs, though contrary to what many may think, this training is not isolated to just combat skills. During their time at Fort Jackson, Sailors also make sure all their personal affairs are in order, from their Page 2 information to any issues their families might face while they're serving in theater.

"We want to make sure that everyone is, trained and equipped to go forward into theater without becoming a burden on the operational commander. They have to be 100 percent ready to go," said Capt. James McGinley, officer-in-charge of the ECRC detachment at Fort Jackson. "We have to ensure they have to have all the right combat gear, and they have to make sure all their pay and entitlements are correct. We take care of a lot of personal and family issues for Sailors as they're training to deploy."

The demographic of the IA Sailor is just as diverse as the Navy itself, a reflection of the purple environment. Sailors of all ratings, from gunner's mates to yeomen, from India or Indiana or anywhere in between, are volunteering for what can be a unique experience, a professionally rewarding tour, and an opportunity to work with service members of all branches.

"We get [Sailors] from all disciplines," said McGinley. "We get submariners, aviators, surface [and] expeditionary warfare [Sailors] ... you name it, we get 'em. We get staff folks from the medical and legal sides, so the entire spectrum of the Navy is represented here."

Some Sailors are apprehensive about the role they will take upon receiving an IA assignment, but McGinley is quick to point out that Sailors going on IA assignments are not the "front line door-kickers."

"A lot of them are nervous about, 'What am I getting into? What kind of mission will I be doing over in theater?'" said McGinley. "The Sailors coming here are going to do combat support or combat service support over in theater. They're not Marines, and they're not Soldiers in the 82nd Airborne Division. They are Sailors who will serve in a combat support role."

The IA curriculum has evolved significantly since its inception, according to McGinley. As missions in support of overseas contingency operations have shifted, the training has changed to meet the newer threats and ensure Sailors continue to work cohesively with their land-based comrades in arms.

"We have a plan of instruction that is a very formal thing and a very big document that we train to," explained McGinley. "But we don't wait for that document to get modified for us to change the training."

Facing an unpredictable and adaptable enemy, U.S. armed forces draw their strength from their diversity and ability to cooperatively interact with one another.

"If there is a new tactic, technique or procedure going on in theater right now that has life-saving relevance, we'll go ahead and incorporate it into the training now so that we don't have to wait for the bureaucracy to catch up with the paperwork," he continues. "That really exhibits itself with the C-IED [counter-improvised explosive device] training that we provide here. Over the course of the last six months, the C-IED training we provide has increased in quality and quantity ... and we constantly tweak and modify that to keep it relevant."

The Initial Shock

Every Sailor in the Navy, whether they came in through boot camp, officer candidate school, ROTC, or the U.S. Naval Academy, can recall the gear issue process and marching back to the barracks carrying a seabag which felt like it was loaded with anvils.

At McCrady Training Center, they get to experience that all over again. The process hasn't changed, though the equipment has. Try on this web belt. Is that Kevlar helmet too small? Does the body armor fit properly?

Helmet? Body armor?

As Sailors receive these items, the enormity of the situation begins to weigh on them, like the body armor for which they were just fitted. This realization is cemented when Sailors are led to the armory, where they are issued the M16A2 rifles which, for at least the next six months, will be by their sides at all times. Sailors will learn how to properly operate, calibrate, and maintain their weapons, and it will be their responsibility

AC2(AW) David Allen Shoemaker, like many of his shipmates, experience their first meals-ready-to-eat (MREs) during their training at Fort Jackson, S.C.

Above from left—

IT2(SW) Barron Fludd and his shipmates conduct a first inventory of their issued field gear. Each Sailor leaves the training center with three seabags. According to Fludd, the chaos of having all the gear spread out and drill sergeants barking out instructions was reminiscent of boot camp.

Sailors wait in line for weapons issue. Once issued, the weapon becomes a constant companion for the duration of the recipient's deployment.

The training center uses a crawl/walk/run method of training.

to keep them in top operational condition, from the butt stock right down to the bolt cam pin.

"Yes, Drill Sergeant!"

The drill sergeants' mission at the training center seems simple: introduce Sailors to an Army mindset and way of life. Cultural differences between the two services, however, run quite deep; for example, the word "quartermaster" in the Army denotes someone who works in supply and logistics, whereas the same word in the Navy references someone who steers and navigates the ship.

"The Navy has conditioned their Sailors to think 'Navy,' and you kind of have to reverse some of that process to get them [to understand] the Army way of thinking," said Army Staff Sgt. Michael Garcia, a drill sergeant from Niagara Falls, N.Y. "For some of the Sailors, they've had Marine training in the past, so you either have to undo or add on to what they bring to the table."

Garcia is quick to point out one of the most significant differences the drill sergeants face when training the IAs. The Sailors who come through the gates of McCrady Training Center have been in the Navy for at least one enlistment, and a significant portion of Sailors are senior officers and enlisted personnel.

"You're not dealing with a private," said Garcia. "You're dealing with seasoned Sailors, so you have to take that into account."

Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Maurice Harris, an IA from Chicago, headed for Afghanistan, was surprised at his first encounter with the drill sergeants.

"They're more understanding than I thought they would be," said Harris. "They knew we weren't used to Army life, [that] we had our own way of living [and] doing things in the Navy. They were patient, yet stern when they had to be."

The Sailors in the midst of this training understand the drill sergeants' motivation.

"You respect [the drill sergeant] because what he's trying to do is keep the schedule," said Information Systems Technician 1st Class (SW/AW) Drew Corbin, an IA from San Diego, headed for Afghanistan. "He's been given a mission to get you ready for combat. They don't take it lightly. That's their job, and you have to respect that."

Arrrrrmy Training, Sir!

Gear issue is only the beginning; once the Sailors are issued their gear, the drill sergeants intensify the training. Sailors are out of bed at 5 a.m., but drill sergeants are usually up at 3 a.m. to arrive at McCrady Training Center early enough to prepare for the day's exercises. Once the day's schedule is finalized, they wake up the Sailors and get them in formation.

Though Sailors may be accustomed to utilities, khakis, and the NWU, the uniform of the day at Fort Jackson includes "the full battle-rattle" – their individual body armor, Kevlar helmets, load-bearing equipment, gloves, and their weapons. The full gear weighs at least 50 pounds.

"Usually, the night before, I like to get everything ready so I'm not forgetting anything," said Corbin.

Classes are an integral part of IA training, and they come at the Sailors at a rapid pace. Classes include basic survival training, a condensed version of search, evasion, resistance, and escape training, including the Code of Conduct. Sailors also learn how to operate the PRC-117F communication system and the basics of Army radio communication, including how to do a nine-line brief – a method of reporting unexploded ordnance or calling for close air support or a medical evacuation. While Sailors may be familiar with shipboard chemical, biological and radiological training, the Army's version can present new challenges. Basic and advanced first aid, an essential skill in the battle field, is also covered in length.

Training can last up to 14 hours, from 5 a.m. to 7 p.m. Physical training (PT) starts at 5:30 a.m., which, in Army time, means 10 minutes prior.

"[The drill sergeants] really mean 'be early,' said Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Nathan Jackson, an IA from Tucson, Ariz., headed for Commander, Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA). "If they tell you to be there at 6:15 a.m., you will literally be yelled at for being there at 6:14 a.m."

After morning PT, Sailors don their full battle-rattle, for the day's training. Sailors will learn a multitude of essential skills tailored to their upcoming assignments, and if weapons familiarity and qualifications are on the schedule, it's going to be a particularly long day.

Weapons familiarity is an integral part of IA training. The M-16A2 rifle essentially becomes as vital to the Sailor's welfare as water or food. Under the watchful eyes of the drill sergeants, Sailors learn how to properly disassemble and reassemble their weapons, as well as how to thoroughly clean and lubricate each component to ensure the weapon remains operational.

Though Jackson anticipated the need to clean his M-16, he didn't realize the difficulty of the process due to the massive carbon buildup in the weapon after a day on the range.

"I hate weapon cleaning just as much as dentists hate people who don't floss," said Jackson.

Drill sergeants assist Sailors in "zeroing," or calibrating, each weapon for a particular Sailor so each round Sailors send downrange goes exactly where it's intended. Drill sergeants instruct Sailors on clearing barrel procedures and ensure they follow each step to the letter as weapons safety is pounded into everybody's mind, especially on the firing range where live ammunition is now a factor.

According to McGinley, the average IA Sailor in training will shoot nearly 1,000 rounds while at McCrady Training Center.

"The Navy made a great increase in investment in the amount of ammunition that the Sailors get to shoot, and that has made a very big difference," said McGinley. "Sailors not only qualify on a weapon, but they become very confident and competent with it. They will leave here with a comfort level that they [didn't have before]."

Despite the structured curriculum, the drill sergeants must remain flexible to accommodate changes in the training schedule, as well as any issues Sailors may need to address – anything from medical to administrative. An end-of-day briefing is held after training, regardless of when training ends for the day, so Sailors know what events are scheduled for the next day.

Below from left—

The hands-on training, such as basic first aid, use of field communication equipment as well as weapons familiarization will prepare them for service in a combat zone.

Active-duty and Reserve Sailors, ranging in rank from E-3 to O-6, undergo a complete physical fitness assessment designed to prepare Sailors for their upcoming global war on terrorism support assignments and individual augmentee deployments.

Army Sergeant 1st Class Matthew Blanchett, a drill sergeant assigned to the training staff, observes and corrects Sailors who are learning weapons clearing procedures. The drill sergeant's role is as much about teaching the right mind set as it is teaching correct procedures.

Sailors learn the proper way to disassemble and clean an M-16 rifle. Many of the Sailors say this is the most frustrating part of the training, yet it is very important in boosting their confidence.

Sailors finally have some down time ... until the next day, when it starts all over again.

In the Field

Sailors at McCrady Training Center eagerly anticipate the opportunity to put what they learn in the classroom into practice.

"Remember everything we went over in class the other day," Garcia said right before he launches into a detailed description of the exercise at hand. "[When you] stop the vehicle, who opens up all the doors?"

"They do!" the Sailors shout in unison, referring to those in the vehicle.

Garcia is about to give the Sailors a practical education in managing and operating an entry control point (ECP), a scenario designed around material they learned the previous day.

The brief continues as Garcia calls on Sailors to form teams to search the interior and the exterior of the vehicle, and to man the designated individual search pit. He also explains how to use the explosive indicator kit, and shows Sailors the "lollipop" stop signs and the spike strips at the ECP.

"Whoever's in charge, make a decision," said Garcia. "You have an interpreter here to use – make sure you use [him]. Like I said before, you are never a stand-alone force. Make sure you use everything you have."

As the exercise progresses, Garcia provides tactical training points for Sailors manning the search pit.

"When you're down here, you grab and squeeze, all the way down," Garcia explains to a Sailor as he demonstrates how to search someone. "Put him at a disadvantage, positive control – they know the deal. If you find something, don't keep pushing – you know something's in that pocket, okay?"

Even with the importance of the training and the serious nature of the situations the Sailors face in theater, the drill sergeants know when to lighten up a bit.

"I try to throw a little bit of humor in there," said Garcia. "It keeps things going – other than that, [the subject matter's] pretty dry for them. Once they start laughing, it gets the juices flowing."

Once Sailors complete the ECP practicum, they get ready for another essential training evolution designed to familiarize them with what has become a standard method of moving personnel and supplies. They pile into the five Humvees in the convoy – four Sailors plus one drill sergeant per vehicle – and the exercise begins.

On the route this particular convoy is taking, each right turn serves as a checkpoint. Each Humvee contacts the base when they pass each checkpoint, and the last vehicle in the convoy confirms that all vehicles in the convoy have passed the checkpoint in question.

During the "clear the area" scenario, Sailors practice the standard tactics to secure convoys when suspected IEDs are found.

Upon locating a potential IED, Sailors know from training not to use the radios to call them in until they are safe within the Humvees, because such devices are often triggered by radio signals. Once an IED is spotted, the course of action is to retreat to the Humvee and call it in on a more secure channel.

During each exercise, Staff Sgt. David Garland, a drill sergeant from Troutman, N.C., points out what to look for when doing an IED check.

"You're looking for the obvious – things that look out of place," said Garland. "Let's give a good example – the road that we traveled on? You see all the crater holes in it? What happens if you saw a patch with nice, fresh pavement on it?" Garland asks. "Let's say there's gravel in it, or fresh sand in it, or fresh dirt. Those are things that you're looking for - if it looks out of the ordinary."

Sailors don't rely solely on convoys to transport them from Point A to Point B; land navigation teaches them to actually find Point A and Point B.

With a map, a plotting tool, a magnetic compass and grid coordinates in hand, Sailors march the pace-setting course – a system of stepping which determines how many strides equal a full kilometer, and then set off on the arduous trek.

Sailors can easily travel 20 or more kilometers by foot during a land navigation exercise across various types of terrain. When using the compass to shoot an azimuth, precision is paramount – 1 degree off and an IA could either find the wrong point or end up wandering aimlessly in the brush. If the latter is the case, the Sailor must shoot a "panic azimuth" – 180 degrees in the opposite direction - to regain his or her bearings.

In addition, each Sailor must not only track the number of kilometers traveled from the previous point to the next, but also remember how many paces equals a full kilometer. If the physical exhaustion of constant movement coupled with the mental exhaustion of tracking the traveled distance wasn't enough to deal with,

there is a strictly limited period of time to find all of the points he or she has plotted.

The Moment of Truth

The purple sky progresses to red, then orange and finally the sun ascends over the horizon. As these Sailors begin the last day of training, this will be the last stateside sunrise they will see for at least the next six months.

As the sun disappears over the horizon 14 hours later, anticipation and anxiety settle like a fog on the training center as the IAs drag their gear out to the grinder for the last time. They fall into the formations they have come to know for the last three weeks, as their drill sergeants muster them and give them the number of the bus they will be riding – one of the three white government buses parked across from the company offices.

The IAs have their weapons, body armor, gloves and helmets. Their seabags have been shuttled ahead to Columbia Metropolitan Airport, where they will be loaded onto the plane that will take them to Kuwait for follow-on training before they arrive at their ultimate destination.

The air is abuzz with uncertainty, but also excitement and a measure of confidence.

"The most important thing [is that] I'm confident in my skills," said Corbin. "If I have to use a weapon, I can use it. If I was on a convoy, I would feel confident [that I would] be ready."

As the buses pull out, the drill sergeants render a sharp salute to the departing Sailors, a sign of respect for the men and women they trained and molded for the past three weeks and the mission that awaits them.

"The overall satisfaction when I get e-mails from Sailors from downrange, [about how] the training we've given them has helped them along there ... that's rewarding," said Garcia. "To know that they got there, accomplished their mission and got back home to their family ... I sleep well every night."

Vlahos is assigned to Defense Media Activity – Anacostia, Washington, D.C.

Above from left—

Lt.Cmdr. Raul Barrientos listens intently as Army Staff Sgt. David Garland, a drill sergeant, explains what went well and what didn't during previous convoy training evolution.

While on a routine mission, Sailors respond to a report of an improvised explosive attack in this simulated Iraqi village.

Convoy procedures are a vital part of the three-weeks of training active-duty and Reserve Sailors, undergo at the McCrady Training Center, Fort Jackson, S.C.

HM1 Anthony Wivell provides emergency medical assistance to his shipmates who were wounded while responding to a simulated improvised explosive attack.

Below from left—

The training is designed to outfit, equip and prepare more than 100 active-duty and Reserve Sailors for their upcoming deployments.

Sailors leave for their upcoming deployments.

OSC(SW/AW) Robert C. Laird Jr.

Story by MC2(SCW) Brian Coverley

Individual augmentee (IA) billets and tours aren't a requisite for first class petty officers to make chief, but they certainly can help to strengthen a Sailor's profile, making him or her "a cut above the rest" and more suitable for selection. Chief Operations Specialist (SW/AW) Robert C. Laird's story demonstrates this very point.

OS1 Laird was assigned to Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, from February to October 2007 serving as Joint Operations Center liaison officer for Joint Task Force (JTF) Paladin. Like other U.S. service members and their NATO counterparts, Laird's biggest concern while in Afghanistan was improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

"I was responsible for tracking, reporting and briefing all IED incidents throughout the Afghanistan Area of Responsibility. [I also had to] deploy various U.S. and NATO explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) teams throughout Afghanistan to exploit the various IED sites for further gathering and processing of information," said Laird.

"I am currently stationed aboard USS *Vicksburg* (CG 69) in Mayport, Fla., as the operations intelligence leading chief petty officer," said Laird.

"As an operations specialist, my primary job is to track, report, display, evaluate and disseminate various types of tactical information throughout the ship and to warfare coordinators."

Vicksburg is currently part of the Navy's ready and responsive surface warfare assets to project power and provide maritime security. *Vicksburg*'s Aegis system ensures that threats can be seen and dealt with from miles away.

In Afghanistan, such a distant and detached style of warfare doesn't work. The enemy often remains invisible until an IED detonates.

"My [operations specialist] training paid dividends and made it a smooth transition while performing my duties [in Afghanistan]," said Laird.

Laird's outlook on how to lead changed because of his IA experience. "Having been an IA doesn't necessarily make me a better chief or a better leader - it just gives me another tool to provide to my Sailors. Leadership is something that you spread throughout the deckplates daily that may not have a direct effect on a Sailor until later in their career," he said.

"As I look back at my most rewarding tour in my Navy career – being an IA – I think the most important tool that I took away from it and use on a daily basis is that you can't take life for granted. So many of our great [service] members have paid the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our daily freedoms. … I put this out to my Sailors daily. Although we work long hours and complete various tasks – somewhere, in some place – others are doing things under worse [circumstances]."

Coverley is assigned to Defense Media Activity – Anacostia, Washington, D.C.